



SUCCESS STORY

Anti-Corruption Efforts Undeterred in Anbar

USAID is building the capacity of local Iraqis to fight corruption in their own communities



At a workshop in Anbar governorate, an Iraqi trained by ICSP discussed corruption and proposed measures the community could take to combat the problem.

As the military works to expel the foreign combatants and combat the insurgents, ICSP and a local organization have partnered to address other factors that fuel the violence, including corruption throughout the province.

Ultimately, the stability of these communities hinges on a transparent system of government that is accountable to the Iraqi people.

When a Fallujah-based civil society organization wanted to offer more training in Anbar governorate, it did not let a day of particularly fierce violence in December affect its plans. While US and Iraqi forces battled insurgents nearby, the organization's trainer continued with the lesson plan that he had developed with assistance from USAID's Iraq Civil Society and Independent Media Program (ICSP). To their staff, the turmoil in Anbar was not a deterrent but a reality that underscored the need for broader anti-corruption training for Iraqis throughout the province.

Local Iraqis see these anti-corruption workshops, focusing on awareness raising tools and other anti-corruption strategies, as a key to long-term stability in their community. While some of the money secured through corruption fills the pockets of government officials, some funds make their way to terrorists. By fighting corruption, this organization is promoting security as well as integrity in government.

Over several months, Iraqi representatives attended ICSP workshops, where USAID specialists shared international anti-corruption techniques and helped the group design a strategy to fight corruption in its community. One of these workshops outlined the legal measures that different civil society organizations have used in other countries to stem corruption. After months of working with ICSP to build capacity, the group applied for and won a grant for eight workshops across Anbar. The need for the training was particularly acute in the smaller villages, areas often neglected in an effort to reach larger, more prominent neighbors. Using their network of contacts, the Iraqi organization solicited participants interested in learning how to combat corruption.

The eight workshops were attended by a total of 225 people, all of them distinguished within the communities, including religious and tribal leaders, lawyers, college professors, and government officials. The distinctive characteristic of this project was that each workshop developed an action plan and elected a working committee headed by a tribal leader to follow-up the decisions of the group with the provincial government.

Each workshop produced different follow-up measures, focusing on meeting the needs of each community. Following one workshop, an eight-member committee was formed to investigate possible illegitimate arrangements at a nearby fuel station and distribution center. In another city, the committee decided to monitor the municipality and its activities. This idea of converting awareness-raising efforts into advocacy activities is being adapted more broadly within the ICSP anti-corruption program.